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**1962/10/23**

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Action

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NO: 185, October 23, 9 p.m.

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Following is first reaction high Swiss officials to President Kennedy's speech and US moves re Cuba:

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USIA

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Acting Foreign Minister Micheli and Chief Western Section Probst regard quarantine measure as maximum course available short of risking war. US action greeted as evidence US not merely reacting or readjusting to Soviet moves but is now taking initiative. Earlier press reports to effect President planned speech, coupled in their minds with reports US naval movements near Cuba, made Swiss concerned military action against Castro underway. They felt this would run 50 percent risk of war. Regard quarantine as most significant of seven points but also impressed by point three which regarded as necessary response to Soviet "rocket-rattling".

Also regard initial Soviet reaction as reported Radio Moscow as relatively mild. Believe however iron test will be what Soviets do with Soviet ships enroute to Cuba. Believe present US moves allow Soviets opportunity withdraw from dangerous position if they so desire.

Re comparison Soviet bases Cuba with NATO bases periphery Soviet Bloc, FPD officials said that while moral differences certainly exist, objectively speaking practical technical differences are less apparent, our distinctions as to motivations secrecy, etc to contrary notwithstanding.

Swiss obviously grateful our efforts keep them advised.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/EOC/IR

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President Chaudet in personal talk with Ambassador said:  
"Kennedy speech clear, energetic. Time has come to take  
a stand. Personally I welcome quarantine; personally would  
be happy with world "barrage" against Communism. But  
objective analysis must be that chances of accidental war  
now materially increased. I would think that with respect  
to Cuba Soviets might lie low for a while, at least to see  
what US actually does. But they might act from fear or rage.  
I ask myself, would they attempt counter action in Berlin,  
and find I cannot answer. Happily I am not a prophet."

FPD Secretary General Micheli told Ambassador [Soviet Charge  
told him he could not understand American reaction re Cuba.  
"We have no offensive weapons on Cuba. Kennedy's speech is  
the delayed reaction of the US to Khrushchev's interview  
with Scheyven a month ago." ]

Austrian Ambassador Tursky told Ambassador Bulgarians,  
Rumanians, Hungarians have been putting out line all day that  
bases which US denounces upon Cuba are no different from US  
bases in Turkey, Iran. Tursky believes Russia must designate  
from Cuba but also save face; therefore, will direct attention  
to Berlin.

Yugoslav Ambassador Smollaka told Ambassador Yugoslavs want  
peace; in every war they get stepped on. Thinks Kennedy's  
speech brings war very close. He thinks Russians will send  
their four ships from Japan to Cuba, regardless of consequences.

Peru, Argentine, Ecuador, Mexican Ambassadors all personally  
enthusiastic. Argentina had received cable from Buenos Aires  
stating his Government was supporting US.

Italian Ambassador Baldoni told Ambassador important to observe  
Russians are trying to play down Cuban incident. Agents are  
sometimes smarter than Governments however (since Governments  
tend be too inflexible). US must leave USSR way to save face.

Embassy officers have received unanimous congratulatory re-  
actions from Swiss contacts. [Assistant to Swiss Air Force  
Commander opened conversation with Air Attache by saying ]

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"congratulations". Swiss Chief of Staff quoted as saying  
US faction comes late but better late than never. [Handwritten initials]

Initial press reaction limited full but straight news  
coverage. Editorial reaction expected shortly. Will report  
when available.

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